ETSU Staff Nurse

By: Gerty Cole

It was truly delightful interviewing Mr. H, a full-time professional Registered Nurse (RN) with East Tennessee State University (ETSU), Johnson City, TN. Mr. H, has been a Registered nurse for over twenty (20) years, and has worked in his current department for approximately fourteen (14) years. Mr. H’s regular work hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. In response to my question, during this interview, Mr. H. noted that he is a salary Registered Nurse (RN). He informed me that his current duties as a registered staff nurse are: intake and Triage, (A Triage nurse is responsible for organizing patients, based on the seriousness of their injuries or medical needs), drawing titers (Phlebotomy), Lab tests, medication administration, charting, and coordinating some patient education as needed. Mr. H. is also responsible for reporting the results of the titer tests done, to the nurse practitioners.

According to Mr. H, the number of patients that he attends to at the ETSU, college health center varies tremendously on a day-to-day basis. He further stated that there is a significant decrease in the number of patients seen during the summer semester, as opposed to the spring and fall semesters. The ETSU university health center is run by nurse practitioners and they cater for the healthcare needs of faculty, staff, and their family members who need healthcare services. The state of TN board of nursing requires that the practicing Registered Nurse (RN) is currently certified within the scope of nursing practice and necessary for him or her to carry out his or her duties competently. Mr. H. also stated that he is expected to possess a valid current CPR certification.

During the interview, Mr. H. informed me that he has worked in other areas of nursing, prior to his joining the ETSU student health center, and that the field he worked in for the longest period of time, apart from his current department, is the home health field. He noted with concern, that the greatest challenge for nurses today, is keeping up with current changes in the healthcare delivery system, and he also added that another area that is disturbing and of great concern, is our inability to produce enough nurses who are educationally prepared to practice at the levels needed in various fields of healthcare industry. Schools of Nursing, healthcare organizations, and policy makers must continue to work together to meet the healthcare needs of all Americans.

In response to the interview question, on what advise he would give to a new nursing student, Mr. H. stated that he would advise the new nursing student that, one of the most beneficial things would be to put in a lot of hours for studies, he or she should try to avoid unnecessary distractions, Minimize doing other jobs outside their the nursing field, and if they must work, try not to do it on a full-time schedule. He stressed the importance of a nursing internship and strongly recommends it as a vital experience, which will undoubtedly add more to the work experience needed by the student. He advised that the new nursing student should endeavor to learn as much skills as possible and utilize every opportunity he or she has to practice these skills.

Mr. H. was a little hesitant, when asked about his involvement with health promotion, risk reduction, and disease prevention. He eventually informed me that prior to his current position, he was deeply involved with patients’ education, health promotion, and disease prevention, but at the moment, it all varies from day to day and is not something he is directly involved in. However, he stated that he does health promotion and disease prevention from time-to-time as needed. Mr. H. responded to my last question, on what field of nursing he would recommend for a nursing student, who is interested in acquiring more skills just as I had expected. He recommends that the Medical-Surgical unit is the best place to learn basic skills that the student will need throughout his or her professional nursing career.

I am grateful for this opportunity to interview such a phenomenal and experienced professional nurse. I have had the privilege of Mr. H. caring for me at the student’s health center before and I think he is an incredible gentle man. This is a memorable experience of a life time. It has further encourage me to focus on my goal of studying smarter, utilize any opportunities that I might have to practice new skills, and to subsequently, become the best nurse that I can be.

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